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\$42 million Sound fix would aid area waters

BY JOHN DODGE

THE OLYMPIAN

SEATTLE — An attempt by Gov. Christine Gregoire to inject more money and urgency into a 20-year, uphill battle to protect and clean up Puget Sound includes several initiatives that could benefit South Sound.

Gregoire on Monday called on state lawmakers to approve a \$42 million supplemental budget request for Puget Sound, adding to the \$181 million for the ailing water body that was included in the 2005-07 state budget.

Most of the new funding would come from existing revenues, including a tax the state Department of Ecology collects on hazardous substances sold in the state. The fund is growing because of the surge in oil prices,

Ecology water quality program manager Dave Peeler said.

More than half of the money would be used to accelerate cleanup of toxic pollutants soaking some 5,700 acres of marine sediments.

The seven-point action plan includes measures with direct connections to South Sound. They include:

- \$6.5 million in loans to help repair or replace some of the 472,000 suspect on-site septic systems believed to be fouling the waters of Puget Sound, including Hood Canal and South Sound.

"Failing septic systems have been a big problem for us," said Bill Dewey of Shelton-based Taylor Shellfish Farms. "This is a significant new commitment to help with on-

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Tony Overman/The Olympian
Nathan Morris (left), owner of Sunset Beach Oyster Company, returns to shore after seeding some of his 400 acres of oyster beds Saturday afternoon in Totten Inlet with Nathan Morris Jr., 10, and worker Travis Pierce of Shelton. "If you ask my opinion, you can't spend too much money on keeping the sound clean," Morris said. "Once it's gone, it will be darned near impossible to fix, and a whole lot more expensive."

Puget Sound panel named

The Port of Olympia and Swantown Marina are just two of the many commercial uses of Puget Sound waters.

A nine-member panel of Puget Sound leaders was named today to spearhead a new Puget Sound recovery plan.

Gov. Christine Gregoire asked the select group to work with the tribes, state and local governments, Congress and citizens on a plan to restore Puget Sound by 2020.

The group has until October

site systems."

- \$3.25 million to restore estuaries and salmon habitat, keying on projects where there are other partners in the watersheds, including the tribes and federal government.

It could spell financial help for such projects as the Deschutes River estuary study, which is looking at the pros and cons of converting Capitol Lake into a free-flowing river, state Department of Fish and Wildlife official Tim Smith said.

Estuary restoration work by the Nisqually Tribe and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Nisqually Delta also could benefit from the governor's initiative, he said.

"Pollution is not the only problem facing Puget Sound," noted Jeanette Dorner, salmon recovery program manager for the Nisqually Tribe, "Loss of habitat is the biggest threat to salmon recovery in the Nisqually."

- \$2 million to remove derelict creosote logs from Puget Sound shorelines, usually pilings left over from old docks, piers and railroad trestles. Creosote is toxic to marine life.

An estimated 3,300 logs will be removed annually, and the Olympia area is one of several areas targeted for cleanup.

- \$2.5 million for projects to control and stem the flow of stormwater into Puget Sound from roads, parking lots and other paved surfaces. Metals, oils and bacteria all reach Puget Sound in stormwater.

South Sound local governments could apply for grants to fund such things as low impact development projects.

Why not make low-impact development ordinances mandatory for new development, especially since most agree that the 1.5 million new people moving to Puget Sound in the next 15 years provide one of the biggest challenges to Puget Sound recovery? Gregoire was asked.

The governor said her Puget Sound initiative is based on public and private partnerships working together, not new regulations. The goal is to find solutions everyone can work on while avoiding political fights and private property rights resistance.

The tenure of the Puget Sound initiative gives it a better chance of passing the state Legislature, said state Sen. Phil Rockefeller, D-Seattle.

"I think we can garner bipartisan support, if we avoid the political minefields," Rockefeller said.

Gregoire challenged government leaders and citizens alike to restore Puget Sound water quality and habitat by 2020. She said success would be measured in several ways, including restoring most, if not all, of the 38 Puget Sound species in decline, from the orca whale to Puget Sound chinook.

And, she said, cleanup success would mean it would be safe to swim in Puget Sound, and eat the fish and shellfish harvested there.

There are health advisories urging people not to eat certain fish due to mercury contamination. And thousands of acres of oyster and clam beds are off limits to harvest due to bacterial pollution.

"As a child growing up in Auburn, we took Puget Sound for granted as a place to swim

2006 to come up with a blueprint for a healthy Puget Sound.

"In short, it will take a miracle, but Puget Sound demands one," said William Ruckelshaus, a panel member, chair of the state Salmon Re-covey Funding Board and leader of Shared Strategies, which just developed a Puget Sound chinook salmon recovery plan.

He noted that Puget Sound cleanup efforts have been under way for 20 years, but pollution, habitat loss and species decline continues.

He and others said population growth is the biggest threat to Puget Sound, home to 3.8 million people with another 1.5 million on the way.

"If we don't manage growth in an intelligent way, we won't succeed," he said.

Billy Frank Jr. chair of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, a Nisqually Indian and a panel member, likened the task to cleaning up a fouled nest.

"I have eagles nesting near my home on the Nisqually Delta — they keep their nest clean," Frank said. "Puget Sound is our nest, and it's asking for our help right now."

Also joining Ruckelshaus and Frank on the so-called Puget Sound Partnership are:

U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash.; Colin Moseley, president of Green Diamond Co. and chairman of Simpson Resource Co.; King County Executive Ron Sims; University of Washington

and fish," the governor said. "We can't take it for granted anymore."

The environmental community hailed the governor's initiative, saying it matches up well with their 2006 legislative agenda, which calls for stepped up efforts to clean up Puget Sound.

"We view the governor's initiative as very significant," said People for Puget Sound's Bruce Wishart. "We're pleased to see the gov-ernor showing this level of leadership."

Puget Sound Q&A

Q:

How does Gov. Christine Gregoire's Puget Sound initiative differ from past efforts to clean up and protect Puget Sound?

A:

The governor said this initiative is different because it will set deadlines for action, establish who is accountable, commit more money and resources to the effort and reach out to the private sector and citizens to get involved.

Q:

How much wildlife does Puget Sound support?

A:

Puget Sound is home to 200 fish species, 100 bird species, 26 kinds of marine mammals and thousands of marine invertebrate species.

Q:

What are some of the signs that Puget Sound is in trouble?

A:

Lower Hood Canal has been tagged a "dead zone" where pollution from septic systems and other sources are robbing the water of oxygen and killing marine life.

The Puget Sound orca whale, which sits at the top of the marine food chain, recently was named an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Some 5,700 acres of marine sediments are laced with toxic chemicals that poison marine life.

Q:

How big is Puget Sound?

A:

Puget Sound consists of 2,800 square miles of marine water and 2,500 miles of shoreline.

Q:

What role does Puget Sound play in recreation and commerce?

President Mark Emmert; People for Puget Sound Executive Director Kathy Fletcher; Bill Taylor, vice president of Shelton-based Taylor Shellfish Farms; and Mike Shelby, executive director of the Western Washington Agricultural Association.

The group's first task will be to visit the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay to see what worked, and didn't work in mega-pollution cleanups in those two water bodies, Gregoire said.

Web Links:

- [See and learn about the creatures that live in Puget Sound -](#)
- [Find out more about other special natural places in Thurston County -](#)
- [Full text of the report "Uncertain Future: Climate Change and Its Effects on Puget Sound"](#)
- [2005-2007 Puget Sound Conservation and Recovery Plan](#)
- [Gov. Gregoire's proposed additional funding to protect and restore Puget Sound \(.pdf\)](#)

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A:

The average annual sale of oysters, clams and mussels grown in Puget Sound totals \$100 million. Another 2 million pounds of shell-fish are harvested recreationally.

About 80 percent of the statewide tourism revenue is generated in the Puget Sound region.

The ports of Seattle and Tacoma represent the second largest container cargo volume in the country.

About 80 percent of the state's 350 marinas and 85 percent of its 39,400 moorage slips are in Puget Sound.

About half of the recreational salmon caught in the state are caught in the Puget Sound basin.

Source: Puget Sound Action Team

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